The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1.   A method for controlling the installation behaviors of a computing device during a software update installation, the method comprising:

obtaining a software update to be installed on the computing device;

determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update;

selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that an installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

installing the update on the client computer.

2.   The method of Claim 1, wherein determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises determining whether a mandatory installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

wherein selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that a mandatory installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises disallowing the user of the computing device to selectively not install the software update on the computing device.

3.   The method of Claim 1, wherein determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises determining whether a priority installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

wherein selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that a priority installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises temporarily increasing the network bandwidth request for downloading the software update's content.

4.   The method of Claim 1, wherein determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises determining whether a deadline installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

wherein selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that a deadline installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises:

determining whether the deadline for the deadline installation attribute has passed, and if so, automatically installing the software update without further user interaction.

5.   The method of Claim 1, wherein determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises determining whether a zero system interruption (ZSI) installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

wherein selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that a ZSI installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises:

determining whether the computing device is configured to automatic installation of ZSI software updates, and if so, automatically installing the software update without further user interaction.

6.   A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions which, when executed on a client computing device, carry out a method for controlling the installation behaviors of the computing device during a software update installation, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining a software update to be installed on the computing device;

determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update;

selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that an installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

installing the update on the client computer.

7.   The method of Claim 6 carried out by executing the computer-executable instruction of the computer-readable medium, wherein determining whether an installation

attribute is associated with the software update comprises determining whether a mandatory installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

wherein selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that a mandatory installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises disallowing the user of the computing device to selectively not install the software update on the computing device.

8.   The method of Claim 6 carried out by executing the computer-executable instruction of the computer-readable medium, wherein determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises determining whether a priority installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

wherein selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that a priority installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises temporarily increasing the network bandwidth request for downloading the software update's content.

9.   The method of Claim 6 carried out by executing the computer-executable instruction of the computer-readable medium, wherein determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises determining whether a deadline installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

wherein selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that a deadline installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises:

determining whether the deadline for the deadline installation attribute has passed, and if so, automatically installing the software update without further user interaction.

10.   The method of Claim 6 carried out by executing the computer-executable instruction of the computer-readable medium, wherein determining whether an installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises determining whether a zero system interruption (ZSI) installation attribute is associated with the software update; and

wherein selectively modifying the installation behavior of the computing device according to the installation attribute if it is determined that a ZSI installation attribute is associated with the software update comprises:

determining whether the computing device is configured to automatic installation of ZSI software updates, and if so, automatically installing the software update without further user interaction.

11.   A method for controlling the installation behaviors of a computing device during a software update installation according to associated installation attributes, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining a software update to be installed on the computing device;

determining whether a mandatory installation attribute is associated with the software update, and if so, modifying the installation behavior of the computing device with respect to the software update such that the user of the computing device is prevented from selectively not installing the software update on the computing device;

determining whether a priority installation attribute is associated with the software update, and if so, modifying the installation behavior of the computing device with respect to the software update by temporarily increasing the network bandwidth request for downloading the software update's content;

determining whether a deadline installation attribute is associated with the software update, and if so, modifying the installation behavior of the computing device with respect to the software update such that the software update will be automatically installed on the computing device without user interaction if a deadline corresponding the deadline installation attribute has passed;

determining whether a zero service interruption (ZSI) installation attribute is associated with the software update, and if so, modifying the installation behavior of the computing device with respect to the software update such that the software update will be automatically installed on the computing device without user interaction if the computing device is properly configured; and

installing the update on the client computer.